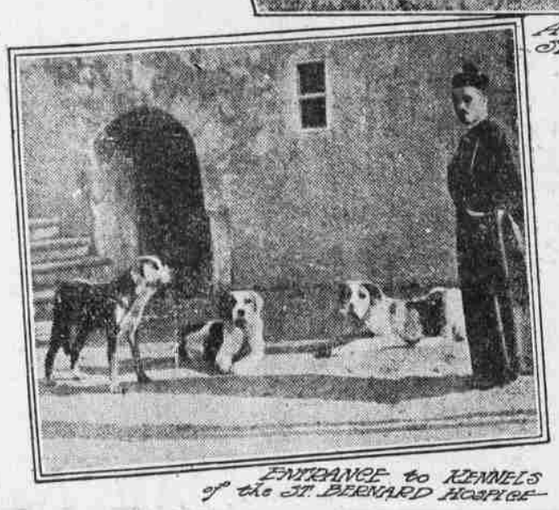
The Wonderful Dogs of St. Bernard

By Sterling Heilig

A full blooded St. Bernard dog



Entrance to Kennels of the St. Bernard Hospice

I HAVE just quit forty of the most magnificent dogs in the world—as big as calves, as husky as bears, as intelligent as folks, as pedigreed as princes, as meritorious as saints, and as pure and plain-living as their masters, the Augustine canons, who, after fifteen years of a climate that is nine months ice and snow, break down completely, with swelled joints, impoverished blood and chronic rheumatism.

The dogs are as aristocratic as the kings who in the middle ages sent them collars of gold; because the first Bernards, their ancestors, were already on the spot, aiding travelers in an amateurish way, when St. Bernard de Menthon went up from Aosta and founded the Hospice, A. D. 962. Their ancestors, bear-fighting dogs of old Charlemagne's court, had been left with certain mountaineer chiefs, among other payment for aid and neutrality, by an earlier Bernard, uncle of Charlemagne, when he marched an army by this route A. D. 773.

Thus the great dogs of imperial court race were near the spot when St. Bernard and his companions built their famous refuge at the apex of the pass; and to understand their evolution—why the good monks began training them not to be like other dogs—they must have an idea of this majestic short-cut of antiquity from north Europe into Italy.

Nowadays the tunnels take you through by rail, in three-quarters of an hour, but before such modern engineering wonders it was different. Why has Napoleon's—or Hannibal's—passage of the Alps remained so striking? Because a great army, with its baggage, camp materiel, supplies, cannons and ammunition carts or yet more ponderous elephants, irrupted unexpectedly on the fertile plains of the south. They fell, really, from the clouds—the clouds hanging round the snow capped wall of mountains! Otherwise, Napoleon must have led his army round by the Mediterranean, interminable journey that would have surprised nobody.

Otherwise, Hannibal, wandering with his hundreds of war elephants from Spain up into France would have been obliged to wander back or stay there. Instead, he followed the Rhine valley to the entrance of the Great St. Bernard, climbed the grand old road, up, up to its snow and ice, elephants and all, and descended on the vines and fig trees of Capua, to the immense surprise of the Romans.

The first army to risk it was a Gaulish one, 150 years before Hannibal. The Romans used it as early as B. C. 105; and the monks preserve tablets that record the passage of various legions. After the foundation of Aosta, B. C. 23, it became frequented by travelers and traders—a Temple of Jupiter actually stood at the top, where now rises the gigantic statue of St. Bernard. Roman emperors improved the road, notably Constantine, A. D. 339. Later, barbarian hordes fell on the empire from its heights; but in the anarchy of the early dark ages it became one of the most traveled and securest routes of Europe, policed by mountain chiefs taking moderate toll—whence the big dogs of Charlemagne's uncle.

So, when St. Bernard founded his Hospice at the top, and collected a pack of the dogs' descendants—already evolved to precious mountain friends of man—it was to succor travelers at the critical point of a unique highway in the clouds. There were other short-cut passes, but none so improved by art and continual traffic. Even today, in spite of the railway tunnels, the Great St. Bernard is annually crossed by 17,000 poor pedestrians.

In the early days, the richer the travelers, the more substantially they showed their gratitude. During the middle ages the monastery became very wealthy. Kings and emperors made it grants. Passing nobles and rich merchants settled annuities on it. And princesses embroidered collars in cloth-of-gold for the big dogs—already of ancient descent from Charlemagne's court—concerning whose unearthly intelligence and goodness all kinds of stories were rife.

Personal friends of mine had an adventure with the dogs last May. Hearing it to be a sporting "English" trip to go sleighing over the Great St. Bernard after a considerable melting of the snows makes the thing possible, they started off, very Parisian trio—retired fashionable ladies' tailor of the rue Royale, Paris, his wife and his mother-in-law, weight and girth increasing in the order mentioned.

At Martigny, in full bloom of peach and cherry blossoms, they took a four-horse carriage up the already dusty road, through the ravine of the Drance, the rocky gorge, the tender spring buds and the woods, the tunnel, and on up through Sembrancher—where the stopped to cool with beer—past ruined chateaux and over old stone bridges, the Drance away down below, often invisible, and all delightful, springlike, and their hearts sang as they went up, like the skylark. * * * They exclaimed in wonder as they began to get views of Mt. Velan with its glaciers and snowfields merging into an all-snow world beginning up there, just above them—so different from the scene in August. On the great curve beyond Liddes village, they felt chilly. Beyond the Torrent de la Croix they struck snow, and at Bourg St. Pierre the sleigh was waiting for them.

The sleigh had been engaged by telephone; and by the same means the good monks would have a hot dinner and fires all ready in their bedrooms. Jingling gaily across the Gorge of the Valsorey with its deep snowbanks unmelted, they chatted of Napoleon's superhuman difficulties in getting 30,000 men, cannon and camp baggage over that historic sticking pot in the same month of May, the year 1800. They were doing it beautifully in a light three-horse sleigh without baggage; but the modern road, hewn in the rock, avoids the old steep, slippery route, scarcely marked by jagged stones sticking out of the ice. It must have been a 25 per cent. incline.

They had struck nothing worse than 7 per cent.; and through the forest beyond it was often almost level, the snow well packed. A favorable moment! Beautiful sleighing! Exhilarating adventure! Up! up! Five per cent., sir. They jingled through a long defile and up into vast boulder-strewn pastures shrouded in white, like great ghosts. How different from a common diligence trip in August, with hurrahing tourists! They still affirm that a three-horse sleigh can take three restaurant-fattened Parisians and a beer-swelled driver up inclines of 7 and 8 per cent. with strength and beauty, had not a blizzard struck them just before the Cantine de Proz.

"Five more miles to climb," they said there, "better hurry! We shall telephone the canons." This is where they always telephone for help to come down from the Hospice, in bad weather; but their fat sleigh man had swigged his birsch-and-hot-water placidly, refused an extra horse and man, and started them off with confidence. This is why they were soon floundering in a blizzard that darkened the sun like night, at the entrance to a black defile, past "precipices" that "turned their stomachs." With a jolt, the sleigh stopped.

"Must wait," said the fat sleigh man, blanketing his horses.

"Where are we?"

"At the Pas de Marengo, three miles below the Hospice."

"Drive on!"

"Go back!"

"Armand, he'll take us over a precipice. I can't see two yards ahead!"

To all of which the driver, lifting the falling-top, covered them with rugs, and lighting his pipe, answered briefly: "They'll come."

"Never will I forget that half-hour while the sleigh was being snowed under in the black twilight of that blizzard," says the mother-in-law of the world-famed rue Royale concern. "And never was I so glad to see human beings as those three splendid big dogs that advanced to us formally, gravely out of the twilight. I cannot think of them as dogs. They were more than persons. They seemed supernatural creatures come to save us, perfectly safely, perfectly easy! Our confidence was complete. We understood their meaning, when they ranged themselves three abreast, just far enough apart for us two women to walk between, leaning on their backs! Armand took an outer edge. The driver showed him."

Up they advanced, dragged, sustained and cheerfully encouraged by the dogs alone, as they affirm, for a mile and a half, the driver leading his horses behind, and keeping mighty close. He left the sleigh and valises—it was no moment for fancy work. When the good canon and his two brown brothers, with reinforcements of four more dogs, came hurrying after the canine first aid, it was possibly a little earlier than they remember. The two miles or more of 10 per cent. climb up the long windings, over the dreary Comb of the Dead and through the avalanche gallery, seems to them a fantastic dream of blizzard and darkness. The two men held the mother-in-law straddled on one of the horses, with the greatest difficulty. Armand and madame, dragged along by a big dog under each armpit, "just loved the noble creatures."

Only when they arrived at the Hospice did they realize that they had no pajamas. Their clothes were soaked and frozen. In a dream they were led to two big bedrooms with two bid wood fires blazing * * * and a big brown brother calling through the keyhole that they would "find a change of gowns on the chair-backs." They were monks' gowns, of scratchy, thick brown woollen stuff that "tickled" the two ladies so that they "ate their soup and went to sleep laughing." * * *

The next afternoon—the driver having rescued his sleigh, sent up their valises by porter, and himself returned to Bourg St. Pierre long before—they went down the 2, 6, 8 and 10 per cent. slopes of the Italian side in a regular service sleigh and dashing style and taking the terrific descents of 18 to 25 per cent. with "sleigh brakes that hold safer than an automobile." Although they found the Pass alive with service movement, mostly local, they consider themselves great sports and "advise no one to repeat the exploit." As to the dogs, they will "send them a present of 500 francs every year." As the first year has not yet elapsed, it remains to be seen if they turn out more grateful than the average tourist; but I believe they did leave $10 in the alms box.

It is a painful subject. To merely see the dogs on the spot and learn of their deeds is worth any man's $10, even in August. And, quite apart, is the question of board and lodging.

The Hospice consists of two vast agglomerations of buildings in the bottom of a cup-like space surrounded by the terrific snow-covered peaks. Yet it is the top of the pass, so high that everyone is incommoded in breathing after a little exertion—no one knows why; but the amosphere is more rarefied and colder than that of any other pass, altitude for altitude, by a technical 500 meters. True, it is higher than the Simpson or Mt. Cenis; but it is lower than the Stolvie or Great Gilibier—all of which I have done, in auto, with none of the inconvenience in breathing experienced around the Great St. Bernard Hospice.

Without the Hospice, the 17,000 poor pedestrians would be in a wretched, even dangerous plight. They regularly sleep at night and eat two meals gratis.

Without the Hospice, 6,000 well-to-do pleasure tourists, who annually "do" the Great St. Bernard in July, August and September by way of diligences, service-breaks and private carriages would find it a much less "romantic and delightful adventure," with perhaps some painful inconveniences.

For one thing, they would have to pay. When a break-load arrives, they ring the bell in the ancient porch and are welcomed by one of the abbes or canons as guests of a chateau. Automobiles not being permitted on the Swiss side, the all-horse locomotion of this pass makes a stay over night at the top practically necessary. With old-fashioned courtesy the tourists are conducted to their rooms by an abbe, and after meals are shown round the church, the kennels and museum, quite as guests in a country house. Never a hint of pay. Every tourist knows—it is universal conversation and all guide books tell it—that each tourist ought to put into the alms box at least what he (or she) would have to pay at a hotel.

All tourists similarly know in advance that the Hospice has grown poor in modern times by continuing to feed, warm and lodge 23,000 mingled rich and poor annually—the grants, rents and annuities that once made it rich having shrunk and dwindled. This being so, what do you imagine the 6,000 gay and arrogant tourists last summer put into the alms box? Less than 1,000 would have paid at a hotel! That is to say, an average of one tourist in six paid up honestly. The rest sneaked it.

This is not why the dogs have a far-away, almost disdainful look. They do not know why they are almost hard up for their soup and biscuits. Once they wore gold collars; now they go about contentedly in leather dotted with brass nail-heads. They do not even know that rich tourists have tried to buy them for large sums—which the good canons gently refused; they would never send their dog friends down to pant and pine in the thick, hot air of the plain. They disdain nobody. They simply do not like our smell—the smell of overheated, overfed, gross tourist bodies, burning oxygen and letting off poisonous gases like a furnace.

Their friends, the abbes, brothers and clean-smelling wood choppers of the heights are plain livers, trained down, all muscle, their very clothes free from the grease and microbes of the festering plain. How, then, if they avoid us, are they willing to bound off through snow and night and hunt out—what they smell so easily, so far away—the strong-scented denizen of low altitudes in distress?

In men it would be called professional ardor. In these dogs we call it atavism. Since St. Bernard de Menthon collected the pack in the year A. D. 962, almost a thousand years have elapsed. Generation after generation, back through the centuries, the same patient training, exclusive companionship of wise men, absence of outside foolishness and distractions, have made it a race of dogs apart. There are plenty of St. Bernards up and down the valley; but they are degenerates from the overflow.

The dogs of the Hospice, for example, take their orders only from the abbes, or canons, not the brown brothers ("marronniers") who live with them, feed them, and for whom they have the greatest affection. Yet before starting on an expedition, an abbe has the chief dogs up before him, one by one. It passes in absolute silence, very queer. When the pure-minded, strong-souled, trained-down, unworldly man looks into his eyes, what passes into the subconscious being of the clean-living, high-bred, human-companioned animal of the thin air and lonely heights?

Two Hospice dogs have crouched beside an exhausted wayfarer, snuggling close to him on each side to keep him warm while the third dog ran back, to lead the "caravan" of rescue to the spot.

Such a trio of scouts have barked continuously in the ears of a weakening, stumbling traveler to keep him awake. Two trudged so close to him on each side as to warm and hold him upright—while the third butted him along from behind a good five minutes before dashing back to bring the caravan.

Any visitor in snow time is given the privilege to wander off and hide behind a drift—as far as he pleases, covering his tracks at pleasure. Then an abbe will take a new bunch of six dogs from the kennels, merely show them your handkerchief in his uplifted hand—of course they get the scent—and off they go, circling, barking, as at a game. After two cricles of the Hospice, at the most, running with their noses in the air like a French deer hound, they have your trail and follow it straight to where you are waiting to be rescued. Then you get your second surprise. Instead of digging you out and offering you a drink of brandy and water from the canteens round their necks, they stand in a circle, laughing at you. You know how a dog laughs?

Technically, the pass is "open to circulation" between the melting and reappearance of the snows in July, August and September. During this period, when the road is alive with traffic over good dry earth, and rock, the rescue work is limited to hunting up adventurous tourists or tipsy "work-seeking" laborers who have strayed or fallen. In bad weather, and as soon as there is snow, the telephone makes rescue work a routine. From St. Rhemy, on the Swiss slope, a telephone message invariably notifies the Hospice of the passage up of each vehicle, band of pedestrians or solitary adventurer.

WOMAN RUNS A BANK

Sister of Jane Addams Heads Kansas Institution.

Located in Girard Twenty Years Ago and on the Death of Her Husband Became the Bank's President

Girard, Kan.—The morning sunlight filtered through the little window in the back office of the State Bank of Girard, and the bars across the window cast a network of shadows on the floor. The woman who sat in the heavy office chair behind the desk was fifty-eight years old, but her face showed scarcely a wrinkle, and the white in her hair glinted now and then by way of proof that it once was gold. The woman was Mrs. S. Alice Haldeman, and she is the bank's president. Mrs. Haldeman has another claim to distinction, for she is the sister of Miss Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago.

"Well, yes, I'm the president," she admitted to a visitor, "only I don't run the bank myself; we all run it together—the two men and I."

It was 20 years ago that Dr. and Mrs. Haldeman came to Girard. The physician's health was poor, and the move was made on this account from the home of their childhood in Illinois.

"My husband became interested in the banking business shortly after we came here," Mrs. Haldeman said, "and he founded a bank of his own. We are the oldest bank in the county and have weathered three panics.

"Dr. Haldeman died five years ago," she added, "and—and with the last words he ever spoke he asked me not to leave the bank. So I took charge, and I'm very glad that I did, for I love the work. But, pshaw, it's not interesting to tell you about myself—you

Mrs. Haldeman and Her Bank.

just ought to know my sister, Jane, or my daughter, Marcet."

Although her name seldom is written in connection with that of her sister, Mrs. Haldeman has done a great deal of work at Hull House.

"I usually spend about three months of every year there," she said, "just to be with Jane and the girls she is helping through life; I have learned to love them all, and I look upon Hull House as my home. Home, that is, since my daughter has gone."

Mrs. Haldeman's daughter has been on the stage for several years. She won't play in any cast in which work must be done on Sunday, and wherever it is possible she goes to Sunday school and teaches a class.

"Do I find life here in Girard tedious? No things move fast enough for me, with my club work and bank and letters and reading."

The walls of Mrs. Haldeman's house are lined with shelves and on these are crowded hundreds of books. Above the shelves are pictures, drawings and paintings; of these last there is a life-size oil painting of her sister, Jane. Marble busts are set on pedestals and the grand piano is littered with books of classical music.

On the center table there was a book of photographs and Mrs. Haldeman leafed through it slowly while she talked. They were old pictures of the old days, most of them showing scenes of the Addams home at Cedarville, Ill.

At one of the pictures Mrs. Haldeman paused.

"That's the old mill at home," she said, and added after a moment, "Jane and I used to play hide-and-go-seek in that musty old place. Jane was the greatest little bunch of enthusiasm you ever saw, and she always was asking people to forgive her for the naughty things she fancied she had done."

And as she turned the pages of the book and saw once more the faces and scenes of the past her eyes became moist.

MISSOURI RURAL POPULATION LESS

FINAL CENSUS SHOWS 53.4 PER CENT LIVE IN VILLAGES, TOWNS AND CITIES.

ST. LOUIS INCREASE BIG

Ten Year Increase in Cities of Over 2,500 Amounts to 22.3 Per Cent While Remainder of State Decreases 3.5 Per Cent.

Washington, D. C.—More than half of the population of Missouri lives in the villages, towns and cities.

The census bureau's complete bulletin upon the state's 1910 enumeration shows the population of "all incorporated places" to be 1,575,616, or 53.4 per cent. In 1900 the incorporated places as they then existed had 1,437,457, or 46.3 per cent of the total.

Conclusively, the story of the last decade's migration from the farm is again told. However, the census bureau classifies the people in incorporated places of less than 2,500 inhabitants as residing in "rural territory." Put this way, only 42.5 per cent of the total is "urban population."

St. Louis increased her population a little more than three times as rapidly as the state as a whole, the group of other cities outside of St. Louis having 2,500 inhabitants or more, four times as rapidly, and the group of cities having from 2,500 to 25,000 inhabitants more than four times as rapidly, while the population in rural territory decreased 3.5 per cent. It also appears that of the total increase in the population of the state during the decade 186,670, more than four-sevenths, was in St. Louis.

The sixty-two cities having 2,500 or more contained 1,398,817 inhabitants in 1910, and the remaing areas 1,848,518, or 57.5 per cent. The same percentages in 1900 were 36.3 and 63.7, respectively. Therefore, the really remarkable gain was in the sixty-two cities. In these communities the ten-year increase amounted to 22.3 per cent, while the remainder of the state recorded a decrease of 3.5 per cent.

The final bulletin compares urban and rural population in detail; sets forth the general population figures of the state for each census since 1810; gives the relative growth of the principal cities, and states of density of population. The average of persons to the square mile last year was 47.9 and the average for the continental United States was 30.9.

Of the relative distribution of urban and rural population the census bulletin says:

"The urban territory of the state in 1910—that is, the cities of 2,500 inhabitants or more—contained 1,398,817 inhabitants or 42.5 per cent of the total population, while 1,894,518 inhabitants or 57.5 per cent lived in rural territory. The urban territory as it existed in 1900—that is, the cities then having 2,500 inhabitants or more—contained 1,128,104 inhabitants or 63.3 per cent of the total population, while 1,978,561 inhabitants or 63.7 per cent lived in rural territory.

"There has thus been considerable increase in the proportion of urban population. For continental United States as a whole, the urban population constituted 46.3 per cent of the total population in 1910 and 40.5 per cent of the total population in 1900.

"The 603 incorporated places of less than 2,500 inhabitants each have an aggregate population of 358,799, representing 10.9 per cent of the total population of the state. These places comprise 104 having from 1,000 to 2,500 inhabitants each, with a combined population of 166,893; 135 having from 500 to 1,000 inhabitants each, with a combined population of 96,145; and 364 having less than 500 inhabitants each with a combined population of 95,671. The population living in uncorporated territory represents 46.6 per cent of the total.

"In all incorporated places, including those of less than 2,500 inhabitants, there was in 1910 a population of 1,757,616 or 53.4 per cent of the population of the state. The population of all incorporated places, as they existed in 1900, was 1,437,457 or 46.3 per cent of the population of the state."

The population of the state in 1910 was more than 157 times as great as in 1810, the earliest year for which figures for the area are available, while the population of continental United States in 1919 was less than thirteen times that in 1810.

Fulton Phones to Consolidate.

Fulton.—The Bell and the Buffum telephone exchanges will be consolidated when the new $40,000 plant of the latter company is completed.

No Favoriteism.

"Is your town doing anything in the uplift way?"

"Oh, yes! We have a committee appointed to see all shows suspected of being immoral, and report on them."

"Good!"

"Yes, a committee of one thousand."

"Indeed! Isn't that a—er—rather large committee?"

"Well, you see, we can't afford to create any hard feeling, and so we made it large enough to include about everybody."—Lippincott's.

Edisonian Epigrams.

"I expect to live 150 years with my system of living.

"Proper eating, sleeping and clothing make up my system.

"I stay in bed six hours, and it's solid sleep and quite enough.

"I never intend to retire. Work made the earth a paradise for me, and I don't believe there is any paradise up above.

"My body and I are still keeping at it for about 18 hours a day, and I seldom get tired.

Most Deadly of All Snakes

Poison Emitted From Fangs of the Echis Carinata Invariably Fatal—Is Found in India.

The most venomous of snakes is said to be the Echis carinata of India. It is about eighteen inches long and of a gray color. The creature is death itself, and carries in its head the secret of destroying life with the concentrated agony of all the poisons.

The Echis carinata is tolerably common in India, being found in nearly every part of the peninsula.

Fortunately, however, for man, it is not, like the cobra, a house-frequenting snake; for its aggressive habits would make it infinitely more fatal to life than its dreaded relative.

This king of the asps does not turn to escape from man as the cobra will, or flash into concealment like the koriat, but keeps the path against its human assailant, and, pitting its own eighteen inches of length against its enemy's bulk, challenges and provokes conflict.

A stroke with a whip will cut it in two, or a clod of earth disable it; but such is its malignity that it will invite attack by every device at its command, staking its own life on the mere chance of its adversary coming within the little circle of its power. At most, the radius of this circle is 12 inches. Within it, at any point, lies certain death, and, on the bare hope of hand or foot treaspassing within its reach, the Echis throws its body into a figure-of-eight coil. Then it attracts attention by rubbing its loops together, which, from the roughness of the scales, make a rustling, hissing sound, erects its head in the center, and awaits attack.

It is said that no one, having once encountered this terrible reptile, can ever forget its horrifying aspect when thus aroused, its eagerly aggressive air, its restless coils, which, in constant motion one over the other and rustling ominously all the while, stealthily but surely bring it nearer and nearer to the object of its fury.—Harper's Weekly.

Natural Mistake.

"Is Mrs. Walsingham at home?"

"No, I believe she has gone out for the day."

"Are you Mr. Walsingham?"

"No; I've just got out of a hospital, so your mistake is perhaps no more than natural."

Dogs Save Their Master.

Winsted, Conn.—Tony Fabiano, a hunter, was imprisoned all night in a well 25 feet deep in the woods at the south end of Highland lake, and but for his two dogs he would undoubtedly have perished either from cold or starvation, as the locality is seldom trod at this season. He was coming down the hillside through the woods and in the dark did not see the well. His two dogs found him. He called for help and his dogs barked loudly until a party of hunters heard them.